GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:493
ANSWERED ON:21.11.2001
SPREADING OF ANTHRAX
ANANT GANGARAM GEETE;DADICHILUKA VEERA GOURI SANKARA RAO;GADDE RAMAMOHAN;M.V.V.S MURTHI;RAMSHETH THAKUR;RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY;SHIVAJI MANE

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether orders/guidelines have been issued to all the postal sorting centres in the country following reports of spread of the deadly Anthrax causing bacteria through mail;

(b) whether sorting personnel have been supplied gloves and face masks and send all suspicious looking mail for proper examination;

(c) whether any mail items have been detected in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the concrete measures taken by the Government to deal with the problem?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The postal staff handling foreign mails at Foreign post offices in New Delhi, Mumai, Kolkatta and Chennai have been provided with hand gloves and face masks.

(c) & (d): No real case of anthrax has been reported so far. However, 76 instances have been reported where post offices in the country have received letters with some powdery substance. The number of such letters received, Postal Circle-wise is as follows:-

Name of Postal Circle	No. of suspected letters
Assam	1
Andhra Pradesh	2
Bihar	2
Chhatisgarh	1

Name of Postal Circle	No. of suspected letters
Delhi	1
Jharkhand	13
Karnataka	4
Kerala	18
Maharashtra	8
North East	1
Punjab	3
Rajasthan	5
Tamil Nadu	5
U.P.	8
Uttaranchal	4
Total	76

(e) The Department of Posts is taking all possible care to handle suspicious mail.The Department has also taken steps to educate the postal employees in general and those who handle foreign mail in particular, about anthrax. Guidelines have been issued to all the Postal circles regarding handling of articles which are suspicious in nature. Copies of the guidelines issued by Universal Postal Union and United States Postal Inspection Service Manuals for identifying suspected articles and preventive measures have been circulated to all concerned. Guidelines on how to identify and handle suspected mail have also been issued by the Department in all the leading national newspapers of the country in the interest of public.